

HCS HB 1623 -- ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Fitzwater

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Workforce Development by a vote of 9 to 1. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules- Administrative Oversight Committee by a vote of 13 to 1.

By July 1, 2019, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) must develop a high school graduation policy that allows a student to fulfill one unit of academic credit with a district-approved computer science course for any math, science, or practical arts unit required for high school graduation.

By July 1, 2019, the State Board of Education (SBE) shall convene a work group to develop and recommend academic performance standards relating to computer science. These standards shall be adopted and implemented beginning in the 2020-21 school year. In addition, the SBE shall develop a procedure by which any licensed teacher who demonstrates sufficient content knowledge of computer science shall receive a special endorsement on his or her license signifying this specialized knowledge.

The bill creates the "Computer Science Education Fund" for the purpose of providing teacher professional development programs relating to computer science. The SBE shall award grants from the fund to eligible entities who have submitted an application to DESE addressing items specified in the bill.

The bill also creates the "STEM Career Awareness Program" to increase STEM career awareness among students in grades six through eight. The program shall introduce students to a wide variety of STEM careers and technology through an online-based STEM curriculum. By January 1, 2019, DESE shall solicit proposals and select a provider for the online program using specified criteria or choose a third-party nonprofit entity to implement the statewide program, solicit proposals, and select a provider. The program shall be supported by the "STEM Career Awareness Program Fund" and shall be implemented beginning with 2019-20 school year.

This bill is similar to HB 948 and SCS HB 248 (2017).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that there are many unfilled programming and coding jobs in the computer technology field. This bill will give all students access to a STEM curriculum and provide a path to teach certification. The bill will assist in preparing a ready workforce for Missouri technology industries.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Fitzwater; Code.Org; Missouri Biotechnology Association; Tim Declue; Gifted Association of Missouri; The Boeing Company; Cathleen Flournoy, Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City; Alliance for Childhood Education DBA Aligned; Missouri National Education Association; KC Tech Council; Missouri School Administrators Coalition; Missouri School Boards Association; and the Missouri Teachers Association.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that substituting a computer science course for a core math or science graduation credit may effect a student's college admission requirements.

Testifying against the bill were Dr. Sharon Sevier, Missouri School Counselors Association and Rob Lundien, Missouri Association For College Admission Counseling.